

A full-body photograph of two men, Senator Tim Scott and Congressman Trey Gowdy, standing against a dark background. They are both dressed in suits and light blue shirts. Tim Scott, on the left, is wearing a dark blue suit and has his hands clasped in front of him. Trey Gowdy, on the right, is wearing a grey suit and is gesturing with his hands as if speaking. Both men are smiling and looking at each other.

UNIFIED

How Our Unlikely Friendship
Gives Us Hope for a Divided Country

SENATOR
TIM SCOTT & CONGRESSMAN
TREY GOWDY

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Unified: How Our Unlikely Friendship Gives Us Hope for a Divided Country

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Prologue

TIM

June 17, 2015, a day that would become a turning point in our nation's history, began as a typical summer day. In both my hometown of Charleston, South Carolina, and in Washington, DC, where I work, that means hot and sticky. June is one of the least glamorous months in the halls of Congress. The days are long, the work is intense, and there is no downtime as we work to complete our legislative priorities by the Fourth of July. The month is filled with the gyrations, machinations, and frustrations of serving in Congress while important legislation languishes.

There was nothing unusual about that particular Wednesday evening. I had my customary dinner at the Capitol Hill Club—salmon, salad, and iced tea—with fellow South Carolinian Trey Gowdy, who is also my closest friend in Congress. We talked through a number of issues before he went back to his Capitol Hill office and I went

to my apartment, where my bedroom had become a make-shift home office. I began making some calls, and I was mid-conversation with someone when I heard the familiar *ping* of call-waiting. When I switched over to take the incoming call, I heard eleven words I will never forget.

“Tim, there’s been a shooting in Charleston. It’s Clementa Pinckney’s church.”

Mother Emanuel.

I immediately texted my friends back in Charleston to see what I could find out, but details were scarce. There was an active crime scene with an assailant on the run, but very limited information beyond that.

Soon the details began to unfold: The shooter was white, and the victims were black. The attack was racially motivated. The victims were all members of a Wednesday night Bible study. I heard that several people had been killed, but nobody could confirm their identities.

Numb with disbelief, my mind filled with questions that can’t be answered this side of heaven. I felt like a ton of bricks had fallen on me, breaking every one of my bones. Everything hurt. I needed to reach out to someone. I needed a friend.

I grabbed my phone and speed-dialed Trey. Given the news coming out of Charleston, a white congressman from the Deep South might seem like an unlikely person for me to call. But I knew he would understand, and I knew he’d be there for me.

TREY

There are times when a phone call can only mean bad news. I had barely returned to my Capitol Hill office after dinner when my cell phone lit up. Tim Scott was calling.

That's curious, I thought. Tim doesn't typically call just to chitchat—not at this hour, and not after we just spent two hours together at dinner.

What could he have possibly forgotten to tell me minutes ago that couldn't wait until morning or couldn't be handled by text?

“Yes, sir,” I answered.

“Trey, there's been a shooting in Charleston.”

“Where? Who? Why?” When you're trained as a prosecutor, asking questions is the natural first response. It's impossible to get that out of your system, no matter how long you've been out of the courtroom.

“It was Mother Emanuel Church,” Tim said. “I know the pastor.”

“What happened? Was the shooter apprehended? Do the police have a motive?”

“I don't have all the details, but I know it's bad, Trey. It's really bad.”

“Welcome to Congress”

Friendship Begins with Trust

TREY

The early days of the 112th Congress felt exciting and occasionally chaotic. Our “freshman orientation” began in late November 2010, after the new members of Congress were elected but before our swearing-in in January. We stayed in a hotel in Washington, DC, and attended meetings, seminars, and panels to learn about the inner workings of government in general and Congress in particular. Current members of Congress taught or facilitated many of the classes, and they offered guidance on everything—including how to structure your office, how to handle travel to and from your district, and how to stay within your office budget.

There were lots of instructions about the procedures governing the floor of the House and all committee work, including strict floor-of-the-House rules about when we could discuss legislative matters, how long we could talk, and even what we could talk about. We had to select an office within one of the three House office buildings and hire the women and men who would work with us in our offices. For those of us who had never served in any legislative body, the learning curve was steep and sometimes confusing.

Congress has its routines, which we would come to know with time and practice, but in those early days, it was all so new. Like walking onto the floor of the House for the first time. Voting for the first time. Getting your member pin and voting card. Seeing your name for the first time on a plaque outside your office.

I will always remember the night our freshman class had dinner in Statuary Hall. I could feel the history. The statues and portraits of yesteryear were all around us. It felt almost as if America's founders were watching and listening. We were walking in the same hallways and meeting in the same rooms where history had been made—and where it would likely be made again.

At the same time, an undercurrent of chaos raced beneath the excitement. Nobody grades on the curve in Congress, and there's not a great deal of margin for those who don't know the ropes, rules, and protocols. Your constituents deserve the same level of representation as those who live in the most senior members' districts, so you must absolutely hit the

ground running. You have to assemble staff both in your home district and in Washington. You have to create a plan and a process and a protocol for every conceivable scenario, including how to handle calls for assistance from veterans, seniors, and people seeking passports, as well as calls from those who have insight into particular pieces of legislation. There’s a lot to learn, a lot to manage, and a lot to take in.

Orientation is also a time to become acquainted with new colleagues. I needed to get to know the chairs of the committees and subcommittees I was assigned to, as well as their staff members. Women and men whom I had known only from television were now seated a row behind me in a Capitol Hill committee room.

One of my more vivid early memories was stopping by Paul Ryan’s office to get his autograph. I’m sure the person who sits out front in his office thought I was crazy. What member of Congress stops by another member’s office and asks for an autograph? One that doesn’t know any better, that’s who!

It seems funny now (and a little ridiculous in hindsight), but Paul had established himself as an ideological leader within our conference, and I wanted him to sign a book for me. He had road maps for tax reform and economic growth, and he was someone many of the freshmen admired and respected. He was, I suppose, famous to me.

Most members of Congress are uncomfortable signing autographs for people, but especially for someone they view as a peer and a colleague. Paul, though, was incredibly gracious

and modest about it—as he is about everything. That seems so long ago, and I can't help but smile at the memory—especially since I would later sit next to him on the floor of the House and stop by his office (often bypassing the gatekeeper out front) to try to persuade him to be our Speaker of the House when John Boehner left. And Paul would later ask me to give the nominating speech in front of the Republican Conference when he ultimately ran for Speaker. To go from seeking an autograph to giving a nominating speech is a long, circuitous trip. But in late 2010 and early 2011, everything was new and exciting and unknown—including our famous colleagues.

I also remember meeting fellow freshman congressman Sean Duffy, who is from Wisconsin. In addition to being a reality TV star, a world-class lumberjack, and father to (then) a half-dozen children, Sean was a former prosecutor. At least we had that in common. I met Sean during lunch at one of our first orientation sessions. He was navigating the buffet line with his wife, Rachel, and all six of their children. Sean was struggling to hold his infant daughter while making plates for the other kids, so I offered to take the little girl for him.

“Thank you,” he said. “That would be so nice.”

“What's her name?” I asked.

He paused, and then said, “I honestly don't remember right now. We have so many.”

We both laughed as he handed his daughter over to me and I carried little MariaVictoria through the buffet line.

Thus began my friendship with Sean and Rachel Duffy. As it happened, Sean and I chose our first offices on the same floor of the same building, so we were able to work closely together during our freshman year. Years later, his eldest daughter, Evita, volunteered in my office and did a fantastic job. The friendship that began in that buffet line, with both Sean and Rachel Duffy, has continued to this day.

In the midterm elections of 2010, the Republican Party had captured a majority in the House of Representatives and now had the largest number of Republican members since the late 1940s. Coming just two years into President Obama’s first term in office, the arrival of this historically large class of Republicans signaled more than simply a change in control of the House; it felt like the beginning of a significant shift in the balance of power, along with all the attendant responsibilities.

Taking control of the House meant not only a bunch of new members, but also new House leadership and a new legislative agenda. These changes added to the virtual chaos. As the eighty-five freshman Republicans were scrambling to learn the congressional ropes, the newly elevated Republican leadership was scrambling to reassign committee chairmanships, integrate new members into the ongoing work of the House, and install their own priorities and agenda. The leaders within the Republican Conference in the House had been anticipating and preparing for the potential chance to govern, and now the moment had arrived. It was time to actually start. The political calculus in the Capitol had been altered, and the town was buzzing with curiosity.

The new roster for the 112th Congress involved an interesting cast of characters, including veterans of the Iraq War, a former NFL player, Ivy League graduates, police officers, farmers, a representative who would later become director of the CIA, and several others who would quickly move up to the US Senate. In the middle of all that were four new Republicans from South Carolina—Jeff Duncan, Mick Mulvaney, me, and Tim Scott, the first African American Republican congressman elected from our state since George W. Murray in 1896. We captured some attention, in large part because there were four of us, and some in the media dubbed us “the Four Horsemen.” Tim and fellow freshman Allen West of Florida were the first black Republicans elected to the US House since J. C. Watts of Oklahoma retired in 2003—making them veritable unicorns on the political scene.

Though the 2010 freshman class certainly made news as a whole, having a black Republican from South Carolina representing the very district where the Civil War began was especially noteworthy. Tim had already become a historically significant figure in South Carolina, as he continues to be. He was a man of color elected over a host of alternatives, including two sons of beloved political figures in our state. To get to Washington, Tim had emerged from a crowded primary field that included Paul Thurmond, the son of legendary senator Strom Thurmond, and Carroll Campbell III, the son of an immensely popular former congressman and governor. He then handily defeated his Democratic opponent in the general election.

Tim also made everything look very, very easy. Meeting new people seemed easy for him. Understanding the legislative process seemed easy for him. Building his office staff seemed easy for him. Even appearing on television seemed easy for him. He never seemed like a “true freshman” as the rest of us did. It appeared as if he had been serving in Congress for decades. I hadn’t met him before we started orientation together, but he seemed warm and approachable, though perhaps ever-so-slightly guarded. I would soon learn that his guardedness was a carefully honed defense mechanism, developed through many years of experience. Tim’s skill set, coupled with his infectious personality, brought instant notoriety and a steady stream of requests for his time and attention. House Republican leaders not only *knew* about Tim Scott, they wanted to make him the face of the “new Republican Party.”

With eighty-five new Republican representatives in town, which included a gain of sixty-five seats in the House, the competition for committee assignments and media attention was fierce, as you can imagine. The freshmen were jockeying for position, looking for places to shine, and hoping for media appearances. Television is such a powerful force, and media interviews were highly coveted for most freshman members. Many people, both in Washington and back home in our districts, equated being seen with being relevant. In our line of work, when the world sees you on television, you have some stature. Whether that is fair, or as it should be, is certainly open to debate. But the power of the screen is not.

As I am fond of saying (only a little bit facetiously), “With the possible exception of love, TV is the most powerful force on the planet.”

Committees are a big deal in Congress, and new members are integrated into the work of the House through their committee assignments. Getting on the right committee is almost essential to your ability to effectively legislate in your area of expertise or interest. The challenge is this: The newest members have the least seniority, they don't always get their preferred committee or subcommittee requests, and they are the last to speak in committee hearings. By the time your turn comes, all the good questions have usually already been asked. You have to be very creative, and you only have five minutes to ask new questions or follow up on your colleagues' previous questions. How well can you distinguish yourself in five minutes, after all the good material has been taken and discussed? It isn't easy.

Early on, I learned how important it is to prepare for committee hearings: Read the materials, do your own independent research, and use your five minutes of questioning as well as you can. I looked for a line of questioning that was different or unique. I showed up on time, and I listened to my colleagues who had been doing this for a long time. Mike Pence, Jim Sensenbrenner, Dan Lungren, Randy Forbes, Bobby Scott, and several others were seasoned questioners. I watched them closely, and I tried to learn.

Your committee assignments control most of your time, allow you to pursue your policy objectives, and often dictate

your sphere of influence. If you're an attorney who wants to reform the civil or criminal justice systems, for example, it is essential to be on the Judiciary Committee. If tax reform is your calling, you need to be on the Ways and Means Committee.

These highly significant committee assignments are made by the House Steering Committee, which sometimes seems as if it is populated by Zeus, Poseidon, the Titans, and the Cardinals. The Steering Committee sits behind closed doors and not only picks committee chairpersons, but also fills all the other committee slots. The most highly coveted committees in the House—Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, Appropriations, and Rules—get people like Tim Scott. Then the committee gods look at who's left—someone like me, for example—and they think, *Well, we have to put him somewhere, don't we?*

Because I was a former prosecutor, the Judiciary Committee seemed like a natural fit for me. Former Majority Leader Eric Cantor and then–Judiciary Committee chairman Lamar Smith were very instrumental in making that happen. Had Eric and Lamar not taken a chance on me, I would never have been on the Judiciary Committee. I also was placed on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, thanks to Darrell Issa, and the Committee on Education and the Workforce, which was a committee near and dear to the heart of former House Speaker John Boehner.

Tim was initially placed on the Small Business Committee and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, but he later relinquished those appointments when he was

selected by Speaker Boehner for the powerful House Rules Committee. The House Rules Committee determines the order of business in the House, which amendments are made and in what order, and how bills will be brought to the floor. Tim's appointment to the Rules Committee was a testimony to his obvious talents as a legislator, as well as an indication of his rapid rise to significance in the House. It was just one more example of the superstar status Tim achieved right from the start.

TIM

Though Trey and I are both from South Carolina, a relatively small state, we had never met before our election to Congress. I remember the first time I met Trey at freshman orientation. From the beginning, he struck me as someone who is sharp, clear, and articulate. To win a congressional seat, Trey had to defeat an incumbent Republican congressman, which is no small feat. You have to be tenacious, and you have to be disciplined. Trey Gowdy is both of those things.

One of Trey's signatures is his wardrobe. His suits are not flashy, but they're . . . well, unusual. His appearance is always interesting, from his hair to his shoes, including his socks. (He has been known to wear a dark suit with white socks.) When you first meet him, he seems fairly understated; but if you engage him in conversation, you very quickly realize that first impressions can be misleading.

Though Mick Mulvaney, Jeff Duncan, and I had previously served in the South Carolina legislature, Trey’s background was as a prosecutor with several appearances on *Court TV* and *Forensic Files*. It had to have been difficult to come into Congress without any prior legislative experience, but Trey is a quick study and a disciplined student. His acumen as a prosecutor was well known in South Carolina, and it wouldn’t be long before the nation would discover that Trey has a very special gift for cross-examination.

As we acclimated to Congress, the four of us started meeting to confer on the issues and discuss how we were leaning on upcoming votes. We were motivated by the need to get up to speed quickly, and we were all looking for ways to be as prepared as possible for the task at hand. We ate dinner together as often as we could, and we would bounce ideas off each other and take advantage of our different perspectives, passions, experience, and expertise.

A lot of folks in our incoming class were in a similar age range, significantly younger than the average member of Congress. With all that youth came inexperience, but also optimism. We were motivated by the challenge of serving the nation.

We had some great mentors in the other two members of our state delegation, Joe Wilson and Jim Clyburn. We called Joe Wilson our scoutmaster. He’s about fifteen years older than we are, and he was our senior member of Congress on the Republican side. He did everything he could to help us get into the rhythm of our committee assignments. Joe is full

of optimism and always has a word of encouragement for us. He is among the most thoughtful and considerate people in the House.

Similarly, Democrat James Clyburn became a strong ally on all things pertaining to South Carolina. Though he is on the other side of the aisle, he was kind and gracious to us from the day we arrived. Well respected as a senior statesman, Mr. Clyburn has always been dedicated to the progress of South Carolina and the nation. We appreciated that we could always turn to him for help with state projects and to advocate with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle. Even now, he is highly respected for his knowledge on a number of issues as well as his influence as a member of the Democratic leadership.

TREY

During freshman orientation, while the rest of us were trying to figure out where lunch would be served, Tim was already interviewing potential staff members. Seriously, he once left an orientation lunch to interview potential legislative directors in the lobby of the hotel. He hit the ground running, analyzing which roles to seek on which committees far more strategically than the rest of us.

When you're new to DC, the most enviable position is in the eye of the media, and Tim had daily opportunities for TV appearances. He was gracious, and he always had time

for Mick, Jeff, and me, but he was light-years ahead of us in terms of exposure, prestige, and notoriety. The rest of us were never asked to go on television to discuss the issues, because nobody knew who we were. It wasn't the media's fault; they simply had never heard of Mick Mulvaney, Jeff Duncan, or Trey Gowdy. Nobody scrutinized our affiliations, as they did when Tim chose not to join the Congressional Black Caucus. No one in the media asked whether the white conservative Republican congressmen from South Carolina would be able to connect with the first black president of the United States. All of that was reserved exclusively for Tim Scott. He had a perch that the rest of us could not attain. With it came pressures the rest of us could barely imagine.

I remember sitting one night with Tim, Jeff, and Mick in a DC restaurant, early in January 2011, when Tim politely excused himself to, as he said, “honor a prior commitment.” As he rose from the table, he smiled a smile that I've since learned means he knows something the rest of us don't know. Twenty minutes later, I glanced up at a large-screen TV in the dining room, and there was Tim Scott, larger than life, being interviewed on national television. But Tim wasn't touting his own importance. He never even told us where he was going. He was almost embarrassed by the fact that he was famous. But he was, and fame comes with a cost.

I, on the other hand, was one of the least known members of our freshman class—and for many good reasons. There was nothing particularly special about my arrival in Washington, except to my mom. Middle-aged, gray-haired

men with law degrees are a dime a dozen on our side of the aisle. I had never served in the South Carolina state legislature. I had never been anything other than a prosecutor—no county council, no school board, and no legislative branch experience.

I got to Congress by winning the Republican primary against an incumbent congressman, which is hardly the way to ingratiate yourself to others in the party. The media labeled me as part of the Tea Party movement, mostly because it was the easiest way to explain how I had won; but it was also because they viewed that label as a pejorative. But in actuality, no Tea Party group supported me in the GOP primary. The Tea Party supported my friend and fellow candidate Jim Lee. I wasn't anybody's favorite. I hadn't ever met John Boehner, Eric Cantor, or Kevin McCarthy before the 2010 Republican primary. So when I arrived in Washington after the election, there were few, if any, expectations for me beyond the lines of my district, and there was no spotlight seeking me out.

Riding into town with Tim Scott, the new hero of the Republican party, I knew I had a choice. I could mind my own business and try to figure things out for myself. I could be jealous of his fame and notoriety (which is a popular option in our line of work). Or I could ask myself some questions about this rising star from Charleston, South Carolina.

How did he get here?

What are the qualities that put him in this position?

How is it that he is always gregarious, always in a good mood, and always humble?

I watched him, and I took mental notes.

Tim could have easily won the job of freshman class president, except he didn't run for it. We tried to get him to run. He would have been the only candidate if he had run. No one would have challenged him. But he didn't run.

(Mental note: This guy has some humility.)

He could have dominated every freshman class meeting. We actually wanted him to talk more! But he spoke only when he believed he had something of real importance and significance to add.

(Mental note: This guy knows when to speak and when to listen.)

He could have had whatever position and any committee assignments he wanted in that Congress, but he opted for a behind-the-scenes role where he would have influence even if no one else knew it.

(Mental note: This guy is strategic.)

I was intrigued by this up-and-coming colleague with unmistakable star power who seemed to break all the clichés and conventions of chasing the spotlight. Tim was a shining light in the epicenter of the political world, he was in constant demand from the media, and he had a cadre of young black conservatives seeking him as their mentor. And he was in the midst of a meteoric rise to prominence on one of the largest stages in American government. A confluence of factors like these would cause a lesser man to change his personality in a town fully capable of distorting one's perspective. But none of this changed a single thing about Tim

Scott. From the very beginning, I knew one thing for sure: This man was different. He was at peace with who he was, and he wasn't going to change.

One of the things that made Tim unique was his understanding of the difference between perceived power and real influence. You might assume that pursuing the most visible position he could obtain would be the ticket to success, but that's not how it worked out. Instead of running for freshman class president, Tim took a job with the Elected Leadership Committee, a behind-the-scenes role that required him to advocate on behalf of the other freshmen.

The ELC is an in-house committee that works closely with the Speaker of the House, the Majority Leader, the Majority Whip, the Chairman of the Republican Conference, and the Assistant Chairman to decide the party's strategy and direction for the weeks and months to come. Our freshman class was so large that one out of every three Republican representatives was new to Washington. Someone needed to be the conduit, the bridge, to take our ideas back to leadership. Virtually no one in South Carolina would have chosen this low-profile role for Tim. No political adviser would have possibly recommended this role. "Be the class president!" That is what the experts would have advised. The only people who appreciated his decision to represent us on the ELC were the eighty-four other freshman Republicans who needed a powerful advocate at the leadership table. Tim opted for a less-visible position—unseen by voters, the media, and the world—in order to make a difference on issues that really

mattered and reflected who he was at his core. No one does that. Except Tim Scott.

Because I had no previous legislative experience—or any experience other than in a courtroom—I really needed someone I could go to quietly and say, “What’s happening now? What’s going on? What happens next? And why?” I needed someone who wasn’t trying to compete with me and who wouldn’t use my lack of experience against me. In short, I needed a colleague I could confide in and trust, and I needed that person in a profession that’s not always known for rewarding trust and confession.

While I developed a close relationship with all three of the guys I came with to Washington from South Carolina, I was particularly drawn to Tim’s humble and open personality. And just as Elvis Presley wasn’t threatened by a stagehand or the guy who plugged in his amplifier, I was no threat to Tim Scott at all. Still, I knew it was rare to find someone who would say, “Sure, I’ll help you, and I won’t tell everyone you need it.”

I realized early on there wasn’t much I could do to pattern myself exactly after Tim. I cannot change the way I look. I don’t have a beautiful bald head or an engaging smile that draws the world in. But I could spend some time with him, as much as his schedule would allow, and I could find out what he had learned about how to succeed in Congress.

The Four Horsemen from South Carolina have a unique relationship with each other, and Mick Mulvaney and Jeff Duncan have always been very helpful to both Tim and me,

but as time went on in those early days, it became increasingly difficult to align all four of our schedules. Jeff began meeting more often with a group we called the Cajun Caucus, led by our dear friend Congressman Jeff Landry, who is now attorney general for the state of Louisiana; and Mick began to form and meet with a group that over the course of time would become the House Freedom Caucus. Increasingly, it was just Tim and me at dinner. Because we're both introverts, we're very comfortable relating one-on-one or in a small group. We quickly discovered our mutual love for the Dallas Cowboys and South Carolina Gamecocks. (Some seasons, pulling for Dallas and South Carolina could be a lonely pursuit.)

Tim and I are both nondrinkers and non-partiers, so our dinner plans and availability seemed to match up well. We now make a conscious decision to save the dinner hour for each other, but it didn't necessarily begin that way. At first, it was a dinner every so often. Then it went to once a week, and eventually it became our highest priority. Our table was never closed. Mick would stop by many nights—as he still does from time to time, even though he is no longer in the House—but most nights it was Tim and me.

Our friendship was not just over food. We also began to collaborate on work issues. One of the first times I can remember working directly with Tim was when he and I ended up on the same side of the vote to reauthorize the Export-Import Bank, which was a big issue in South Carolina. Mick and Jeff were voting the other way, which meant we were split 2–2.

We were a pretty tight delegation, so that was unusual for us. Because South Carolina is a small state, it was important for the four of us to sync our watches. If we split 2–2, it meant to some people back home that two of us were wrong. We needed to be prepared to explain not only our own votes, but also why we had split—and all without criticizing the two who voted differently. Tim and I felt comfortable enough with each other, and trusted each other enough, to effectively explain why we voted the way we did.

For me, our friendship took a dramatic turn one evening when Tim showed up to the table looking overwhelmed and perplexed, which was odd. I’d never seen him anything less than fully composed and fully in control. When I asked if there was anything I could do, anything he needed, he shared with me the darker side of being politically sought after. Turned out, there actually were some frustrations with living in the spotlight, being everything the rest of the world wanted him to be. Tim was famous, in demand, constantly sought out. He was also exhausted—both physically and emotionally.

As he still does at times today, he was trying to say yes to everyone and everything, and he was being pulled in a thousand directions. Colleagues were asking him to get involved in nearly every major legislative initiative, and he was struggling to say no. On that night, and for just a moment, he seemed vulnerable. He seemed mortal. He seemed to be in need of some trusted counsel and a friend who would simply listen.

TIM

As our schedules filled up and our committee assignments began to demand more of our attention, the Four Horsemen remained intentional about our time together. Jeff Duncan and I shared an apartment, and we became close friends. Trey and Mick knew each other from back home, and they continued to spend time together. The four of us still had dinner together often, as well as several collective media interviews.

But at some point, as usually happens in any relationship, the competing demands on our time began to pull us away from one another. Soon, it became just Trey and me at the dinner table, more often than not. It wasn't planned at the beginning; it just happened organically. He and I began to develop our own friendship, and we began to appreciate the role we could play in each other's lives, both in Washington and at home.

It didn't take long for me to become aware of the media's high interest in the two new black Republicans, Allen West and me. The Republican House leadership encouraged us to be as visible as we felt comfortable with on the issues that mattered to each of us. It was an incredible opportunity for them to have two African American Republican members of Congress. The demands were intense. I had total autonomy to decide how involved or uninvolved I wanted to be, but the volume of media requests was constant—and often through the roof.

I quickly decided that I did not want to become the guy

who represents “the conservative black perspective” on every issue. Allen and I both wanted to find our own stride, determine our own answers to the issues, and just be ourselves in the political climate. Yet I wanted to answer enough of the questions and respond to enough of the interviews that my voice would be heard where it could possibly make a difference. This created a tension that began to take its toll. With such a steady stream—or torrent—of opportunities, it was difficult to decide which interviews to take and which to decline. No matter how many times I said yes, I was still turning down 95 percent of the requests.

Trey brought so much truth to that dilemma. He always encouraged me to guard the brand I had created. Trey is very purposeful, and he reminds me to be that way as well. He told me that I did not have to accept the requests and assignments that were not in my best interest. He was very sensitive to the reality of politics and race, and he knew that while it might be helpful to the party to have a black Republican speak out on any number of issues, it might not be helpful to me as an individual.

I’ll never forget Trey’s advice that evening when I was feeling exhausted. In a lot of ways, it cemented our friendship and set a pattern for how we would speak into each other’s lives as friends. He said, “Tim, you worked your tail off to get here. No one up here endured what you did to get elected to the US House. You challenged a highly competitive field in a primary, and almost nobody up here was knocking on doors in the Charleston heat to get those votes. You have earned

every bit of the political capital you have. Don't let others spend it. Don't take on every issue simply because it is better for the party to have you as a spokesperson. Don't let other people use your political capital, unless you decide you want to. You decide if, when, and where to spend it."

That was exactly what I needed to hear.

TREY

From a personal standpoint, what Tim really needed was someone he could trust, someone who would listen to him, someone who could possibly understand what he was going through, even if I had not experienced it myself. From a practical standpoint, all he really needed was some help prioritizing his time. On top of that, he just needed to be reminded that he had *earned* everything that had come to him—and it was therefore *his* to invest, conserve, and employ.

After that conversation, I remember thinking, *I have finally contributed something to this guy who, a week ago, I didn't think needed anything. He seemed to have everything.* (Then again, we know that no one truly has everything, regardless of appearances.)

Here's the moral of the story, for me: I don't care how great things may *appear* to be going in someone else's life; we *all* need somebody we can trust, that we can be fully candid with, and who will give us the best advice for *us* and not just for *them*. I have certainly benefited from others giving

me their unconditional affirmation and encouragement, and their counsel without an agenda, and this was a chance for me to pay it forward to someone else. Of course, it was helpful to the Republican Party to have a mosaic of faces to present to the public. There is certainly a benefit to the synergy of representatives such as Tim Scott, Mia Love, Elise Stefanik, Marco Rubio, and Will Hurd. But the question was not what was best for the Republican Party or even for me. The question was what was best for Tim Scott. I reminded him of the path he had traveled to get where he was, and we reflected on the loneliness of running for office.

I also passed along to Tim some advice I had received from Paul Ryan: “Find what you’re good at, and do more of it. Find what you’re bad at, and stop doing it.” It’s not quite Aristotle or Kierkegaard, but Paul’s counsel was eminently wise and practical—and much easier to remember. I also shared some advice I’d received from David Wilkins, former speaker of the South Carolina House and US ambassador to Canada under George W. Bush. Wilkins had once told me, “It’s better to be a good guy with a bad idea than a bad guy with a good idea.”

I synthesized the wisdom of Paul Ryan’s and David Wilkins’s advice into my own personal mantra: “Find what you’re good at, and be a decent person in the process.”

Tim and I were in completely different spots. He was the most famous and most influential member of the historic freshman class of 2010, while I was a virtual unknown to anyone except for my family and friends. But I thought the Ryan/Wilkins mantra could possibly work for both of us.

In that conversation, we began to forge a friendship of the rarest kind in politics: one devoid of pretense. In our line of work, most relationships are transactional. In other words, “What’s in it for *me*? What do I stand to gain from this?” Relationships where people put the other person first and remain committed to giving their best counsel for the benefit of the other person are few and far between.

The conversation that changed the tenor of our relationship began innocuously enough. Tim and I had certainly been friendly before that, but when the most popular and respected new member of Congress was vulnerable enough to risk asking for help, it showed that even the best and the brightest can have moments of doubt and indecision. In the world of politics, where people too often exploit others’ perceived weaknesses and attempt to gain advantage through any means, Tim’s willingness to let down his guard was different and remarkable. Though I didn’t think about it at the time, my willingness to offer my best counsel, rather than looking for an angle to advance my own interests, was probably different too. Knowledge is power in politics, and keeping the vulnerable confidence of a fellow elected official is rare. There are times when sharing knowledge will benefit only the one who has exposed the shared vulnerability. Integrity means keeping the confidence. That isn’t politics. That is friendship. Friendship trumps politics. Or at least it should.

As a result of that conversation, Tim and I began to build trust with one another, and that has increased exponentially over the course of our time in Congress. Once you know

someone will keep a confidence, give you sound counsel, and genuinely have your best interests at heart, there is no limit to what you can share, and there is no limit to what can be gained. Today, even the national media reporters recognize there is something different about our friendship. They don't refer to us as colleagues or delegation mates; they refer to us as close friends. This friendship that began because of politics is hardly constrained by politics. Our connection is emotional and spiritual and real, and it affects every facet of our lives—from sharing our deepest fears and frustrations to calling each other's mom on her birthday.

In 2014, there was a prominent sticker on the back of my mother's car: *Tim Scott for Senate*. In my opinion, it was displayed even more conspicuously than her *Trey Gowdy for Congress* sticker. (Not that I would notice or carry a grudge.) Of course, she wanted us both to win. But I think what she really wanted was for people in Upstate South Carolina to know she was pulling for a young man from Charleston who was like a brother to her own son. This year, the flowers Tim sent my mom on her birthday arrived before the ones I sent. Do not ask me why or how that happened! But because Tim not only remembers my mom's birthday but actually does something to celebrate it, I suspect that *Tim Scott for Senate* sticker will probably stay right where it is.

Our trust and friendship have grown, and we've made room at the table for others, as well. At our nightly meals, we're almost always joined by new friends who have entered our lives from both sides of the aisle. We have shared many

meals with Tom and Anna Cotton and their children, Marco and Jeanette Rubio and their children, Lindsey Graham, Joni Ernst, Stacey Plaskett, Tulsi Gabbard, Luis Gutiérrez, Peter Welch, John Ratcliffe, Jason Chaffetz, Mia Love, Mark Walker, and too many others to recall. It's a fascinating experience to have such a diverse group of friends sharing a meal together. That table is big enough for all people of good conscience, across any line you can imagine.

TIM

Though Trey and I bonded over things we have in common, there was a time in our state's history when our friendship would have been impossible. My mother, Frances Scott, would have been delighted to imagine the beauty of this friendship, but segregated schools, water fountains, and restaurants were the norm in her generation. Even at the time I was born, segregation was more typical than not in the South. My mother's generation knew a very different South than the one in which Trey and I would come of age. I cannot fathom the shock and amazement that our unlikely friendship would have sparked when we were kids.

In so many ways, we are two very different people. I'm a big-picture person, and I like to focus on vision. Trey is more analytical and strategic. He remembers everything that ever happened. Others have told me my memory is very good, but I don't necessarily agree. I try to have a *selective*

memory: I choose not to remember the negative. It’s actually a pretty effective strategy. I lead with hope; Trey is more of a skeptic. He thinks well on his feet and is an expert at cross-examination; I tend to analyze things later. He’s a fantastic student, and his preparation is impeccable. I enjoy assessing and planning, but he enjoys dissecting. I’ve worked hard to excel, but Trey is naturally brilliant. Because of our different backgrounds and life experiences, there are times when our vantage points are polar opposites. But one thing that binds us together is a true desire to know each other beyond our differences. We utilize that knowledge and our different perspectives to make each other better.

One of the keys to overcoming problems in our society is finding common ground. We don’t have to agree on *everything*, but wherever we *do* agree . . . let’s start there. I have found commonality to be a powerful tool. Trey understands the concept of mutually beneficial opportunities as well as anyone I’ve ever met, especially in leadership. His lifestyle reflects what we’re talking about. One of the reasons Trey and I have been able to have some frank discussions about problems, challenges, and obstacles—and overcome them very quickly—is that we have intentionally sought to find common ground. No matter what differences we may have with another person—social, racial, political, spiritual, ideological—if we will look for *something* we have in common, or something we can admire or emulate in the other person, we can always build on that.

Trey and I are both in politics, but politics is not going

to change the nation. We will change the nation only by changing the condition of the human heart. And that can only happen through love. True friendship is born out of acceptance and unconditional love—a love that is consistent and intentional.

I'm very optimistic about our future, but if we're going to change the world, it will happen through friendship. It will happen as each of us enlarges our comfort zone to make room for unlikely friendships with people with whom it may appear, at first glance, we have little in common. Pursuing unlikely friendships will require us to do things that seem uncomfortable at first. But what is hard becomes easier with practice. As we choose to do the hard things, we will soon reap the benefits.